

International Year of Astronomy

Astronomy Olympiad Closing Event

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In celebration of the Closing of the Astronomy Olympiad Competition, one of the International Year of Astronomy 2009 activities organized by the Planetarium Science Center, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina is hosting Dr. Robert Williams; Former Director of Hubble Space Telescope Science Institute and President-elect of the International Astronomical Union; and Dr. Jeffrey Hoffman; NASA Astronaut and Professor at MIT; to lecture at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Conference Center, Multipurpose Hall, on Saturday, 28 March 2009, at 12:00 noon.

Dr. Jeffrey Hoffman

Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) NASA Astronaut
Lecture: Astronaut Servicing of the Hubble Space Telescope - Rescue, Repair, and a Look towards the Future



Biography

Dr. Hoffman was born in 1944, in Brooklyn, New York. He graduated from Scarsdale High School, Scarsdale, New York, in 1962; then received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Astronomy (graduated summa cum laude) from Amherst College in 1966; a Doctor of Philosophy in astrophysics from Harvard University in 1971; and a Master's Degree in Materials Science from Rice University, in 1988.

Dr. Hoffman's original research interests were in high-energy astrophysics, specifically cosmic gamma ray and X-ray astronomy. His doctoral work at Harvard was the design, construction, testing, and flight of a balloon-borne, low-energy, gamma ray telescope.

Dr. Hoffman was selected as a NASA astronaut in 1978, and served in the Astronaut Corps from 1978-1997, making five space flights and becoming the first astronaut to log 1000 hours of flight time aboard the Space Shuttle.

As of 2005, he is currently Co-Director of the Massachusetts Space Grant Consortium at MIT's Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

Abstract

I was fortunate to have been selected as a NASA astronaut in 1978, when NASA was preparing to start flying the Space Shuttle. I made five space flights during my 19 years with NASA and became the first astronaut to accumulate 1000 hours of space flight onboard the Shuttle. Of all the missions I flew, the one with the greatest impact was surely the rescue and repair of the initially flawed Hubble telescope in December, 1993. I will discuss the training that I underwent preparing for space flights and show images of the Hubble rescue/repair mission. I will also discuss the subsequent Hubble servicing missions and the final servicing mission planned for later this year.



Dr. Robert Williams

Former Director, Hubble Space Telescope Science Institute
President-elect, International Astronomical Union
Lecture: The New Universe: Revelations from Space Telescopes

Biography

Dr. Robert Williams is currently Distinguished Research Scholar of the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) in Baltimore, MD, having served as Director of the Institute from 1993-98. The Institute, together with Goddard Space Flight Center, operates the Hubble Space Telescope for NASA. Before assuming his present position, Williams spent 8 years in Chile as Director of the Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory, the national observatory of the U.S. in the Southern Hemisphere. Previous to that time, he was Professor of Astronomy at the University of Arizona, in Tucson for 18 years.

Dr. Williams' research specialties are space astronomy, nebulae, novae, and emission-line spectroscopy and analysis. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1962; and a PhD in Astronomy from the University of Wisconsin, in 1965.

Dr. Williams is currently a member of the prestigious American Academy of Arts & Sciences, and this year he becomes President of the International Astronomical Union.

Abstract

New discoveries from Hubble Space Telescope, and from complicated computer calculations have revealed important facts about the universe that were not imagined years ago. The existence of black holes, the accelerating expansion of the universe, observing galaxies near the time of their formation after the Big Bang, and the presence of planets in solar systems around other stars that might support life are all subjects for which we have recent information. The discoveries of astronomy are profound and impact our understanding of ourselves on Earth.